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ABSTRACT

With the education reform movement came dissonance over testing as an indicator of classroom learning. This paper examines both formal and informal assessment and relates one institution's attempt to provide a bridge between authentic and traditional assessment. Authentic assessment is defined as a belief that student evaluation should measure performance using real life experience rather than standardized tests--a process that includes observation, conferencing, portfolios, self-evaluation, collaborative evaluation, and traditional paper and pencil tests. In the fall of 1988, portfolio development was begun at Wright State University (OH) as a department-wide, preservice teacher education endeavor. The portfolio design model infused such items as formal assessment instruments, personality assessments, and student teaching evaluations. Students were required to reflect on these instruments and use the results as an analytical tool. Results indicated students found the portfolio activity useful in connecting life experiences to undergraduate education. Faculty also supported performance assessment in the form of portfolios. (Contains 18 references.) (LL)

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BRIDGING TRADITIONAL AND AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT

by

Donna J. Cole

Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education
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BRIDGING TRADITIONAL AND AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT

A LITTLE ASSESSMENT HISTORY

Evaluation remains an essential responsibility of educators. The public concern about the quality of education has frequently resulted in statewide comparisons of testing results by school and grade that appear in local newspapers. The public uses these scores to determine the success of educating students in their community. Scores alone lack the scope of assessment and evaluation. Much more goes into determining competency. Educators must incorporate both traditional and authentic assessment procedures to accurately extrapolate growth.

This paper, *Bridging traditional and authentic assessment,* will look at both formal and informal assessment and relate one institution's attempt to provide a bridge between Authentic and Traditional Assessment. A brief historical overview provides a framework for understanding why a vexing situation appears today in the education area when analyzing assessment .

The influence of testing on educational systems and policy is considered to be more powerful now than in any time in history (Valencia & Pearson, 1987). Testing exerts control over schools and instructional programs, so much so that at times, testing becomes the curriculum (Valencia, Pearson, Peters & Wixson, 1989). With the nationwide outcry for reform, a counter demand for test score improvement impedes educational progress. The pervasive use of tests undermines educational progress that contrast with current theory and practice (Valencia et al., 1989).

In 1973, twenty years ago, Worthen and Sanders introduced their text ***Educational Evaluation: Theory and Practice*** by explaining the then state of the art in assessment:

> Evaluation is one of the most widely discussed but little used processes in today's educational systems. This statement may seem strange in the present social context where attempts to make educational systems accountable to their publics are proliferating at a rapid pace.

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Many question if any progress in evaluation has occurred in the last 20 years. Of course progress has happened. But a review of formal and informal evaluation might clarify why authentic assessment is having such a difficult time finding legitimacy in the 1990's.

Evaluation, not a new concept, was clearly evident when Socrates used mediated evaluations as part of his attempt to guide learning with his students. Even the Chinese (200B.C.) conducted civil service examinations (Worthen and Sanders, 1973).
Our nation's evaluation history is strongly rooted in the testing idea. Robert Thorndike (early 1900's), called the father of the educational testing movement, helped convince the country of the value of measuring human change. The standardized test paradigm gained momentum in the 1920-30's. *The Eight Year Study* of Tyler and Smith and the accreditation evolution established formalized evaluation as the most substantial way to account for learning. The establishment of the Educational Testing Service (ETS) solidified the supremacy of tests as the ultimate assessment tool.

With the school reform movement came dissonance over testing as an indicator of classroom learning. The 1980's theme of "accountability" fostered test documentation. School systems invested huge amounts of time, energy and money into testing. Minimum competency tests, state-mandated tests, criterion-referenced tests and norm-referenced tests were but a few that became an active part of the school schedule. These exercises involve limited tasks (ex. reading a phrase and answering a multiple choice item). A major test criticism is that most tests require lower level thinking skills and ignore higher-level (perhaps controversial but certainly more life useful) skills. Almost every state expects educators to teach for knowledge, skills, attitudes and values, yet tests can give little or no information on these except for some knowledge and skills. While traditional modes of assessment continue in a majority of classrooms, educators do recognize the problems inherent to these tools.

Educators have questioned the content of standardized achievement tests, pointing to its narrow assessment of isolated skills (Gomez, Graue, & Bloch, 1991; Shepard, 1989) and applicability only to limited curriculum areas (Jacobs, 1990). Teachers believe that the multiple choice formats, consistent with traditional assessment,do not measure students' ability to organize relevant information or to present a coherent argument. Teachers see that their colleagues feel forced to teach to tests and understand that this leads to cheapened instruction, undermining the authenticity of test scores. Many times instruction falls to mere practice and drills, driving out quality teachers and devaluing the meaning of test results (Shepard, 1989). Traditional assessment practices may be insensitive to the individual growth that educators desire in students; thus the instruction itself appears misguided (Valencia et. al., 1989). Educators know that reports based solely on traditional standardized test scores represent a limited, microscopic and incomplete view of students' abilities (Hiebert & Calfee, 1989) and fail to clarify the total progress of students (Flood & Lapp, 1989). As Wolf (1989) identifies, traditional assessment structure does not promote encouragement of lifelong skill acquisition, and much of the testing prevents students from thoughtfully responding to and judging their own work.

Lately, there has been a movement that opposes mere testing for accountability, and this movement is supported by evidence from educational psychology theorists who view learning as "constructive and interactive in nature" (Henrikson, 1992). As we move toward the turn of the century, educators are determined to clarify the necessity for more multi-dimensional assessment tools. A revisit of informal strategies from the 1960's and early 70's left educators short of a satisfactory method for assessing the dynamic processes involved in learning. A cry for authentic assessment rich in documenting all aspect of learning surfaced.

WHAT IS AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT?

Several characteristics represent authentic assessment. Of prime importance to educators is the belief that assessment should measure student performance in relation to sound educational goals. The student needs exposure to content germane to these goals. It must reflect the student's current work. Since learning represents much more than merely retaining given knowledge and mastering a set of discrete skills, authentic assessment must be multi-dimensional to include all the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values identified by the system as essential. Students should apply skills, integrate knowledge and demonstrate values and attitudes. *Multi-dimensional* means to employ multiple indicators of students' performance. This new assessment requires the concentration of student and teacher. Examples of the process include observation, conferencing, the writing process, self evaluation, collaborative evaluation as well as traditional paper and pencil tests.

The total educational community must hold authentic assessment in esteem. The exercises involved should be useful, worthy and meaningful to students and learning community. Thus students are held accountable for learning of substance; likewise, educators are held accountable to provide student with informative feedback to students. Checklists, a single letter grade or number, has little or no feedback for students' continual growth. Authentic assessment should be unbiased in terms of race, culture, and gender. It should also reflect what students are learning and help them to gain confidence in their ability to master the subject.

The principle that students demonstrate, what they know and can do remains central to authentic assessment. Hence, authentic assessment normally is classified as performance based. Performance based assessment expects students to demonstrate, in a natural context, what they have learned. This type of evaluation can be open ended and can be structured or unstructured, announced or unannounced or close ended (Stiggins,

1987). The following four ideas should be consider in designing performance based assessment

1. The purpose for the activity should be clear. The instructor should know how he/she will use the results.
2. The activity should be designed to meet the instructional goals, and to guide students in applying what they learned.
3. The activity should have more than one possible answer and perhaps more than one possible outcome.
4. Student designed activities could serve as a possible assessment.

Assessment of this nature should be developed within the school schedule. The assessment needs to be administrated at various points during students' progress, which will lead to a more comprehensive view of the students' learning; however, educators should clarify how students undertake the task.

Scoring authentic materials causes concern from evaluation experts. Careful analysis is required. All records need to be written. A decision must be made if holistic or analytic scoring is appropriate for the purpose of the evaluation. The scoring criteria should be established before administration. Both students and teachers must understand the task, purpose and usability. All recording devices must be available before the students undertake the activity (ex checklist and rating scales). As the evaluation is scored, written criteria should be used as a guideline (Baron, Forgione, Rindone, Kruglanski and Davey, 1989).

Although testing will be a part (usually limited), most of the assessment involves a process of unobtrusive information-gathering about students' learning. The assessment evidence will be collected during the course of the daily schedule; it is an on-going process and not just once or twice a grading period. Efficiency is inherent in the design since the educators will spend less time on standardized tests. The side effect of trauma should also decline. The classroom environment should remain more student-learning centered.

Students' learning is explored through questions and observations. The assessment is thus more relevant to the learning task.

The employment of portfolios has obtained significant attention as an alternative to traditional student assessment. There are several reasons why portfolios accurately attend to authentic assessment criteria. Portfolios contain actual classroom artifacts. Because the portfolio can contain many entries, both formal and non-traditional entries can be incorporated. Thus making possible the evaluation of the full range of cognitive skills. The ultimate result will be more reliable due to the availability of more than one illustration of academic performance. Another advantage to portfolio assessment is that it will enable the teacher to evaluate the students' learning process; therefore, identifying and utilizing current learning theories. Built on this advantage is the involvement of the students in their own assessment. Students help in the selection of work samples, and even more importantly, reflect on what the selected entries represent. Students examine and analyze their work. This provides them the opportunity to reflect on the depth of their learning.

REFLECTION

Students are seldom requested to reflect on conventional assessment.

When preliminary work entries appear in portfolios, students' reflection on each step of the learning process leads to completion. Students gain knowledge and understanding of " the scope of what they learned" (Wolf, 1989). Although original reflections might focus on less significant dimensions as neatness of showmanship, with practice, students develop the ability to modify and expand their criteria and factors. Students and teachers need guidance in writing reflective statements. If students lack guidance in reflective writing, they will tend to summarize what the selection is rather than to analyze and extrapolate what went into it, or why it represents learning, etc.

According to Killion and Todnem (1990), reflections can be categorized in three avenues. First, reflection-on-action requires looking back upon what one has accomplished and reviewing the actions, thoughts and product. The second form of reflection is reflection-in-action. In this reflective activity, the individual is responsible for reflecting in the act of carrying out the task. If, for example, the student is writing a story and has left out the setting, a major component of the story, reflection in action could guide the student to include the setting . The final reflective form centers on reflection-for -action. This reflection form expects the participant to review what has been accomplished and identify constructive guidelines to follow successfully in the given task in the future.

THE REFLECTIVE TEACHER

Given: In authentic assessment, it is imperative that teachers reflect.

Teachers in authentic assessment environment do reflect. According to Lasley, (1992), "A teacher's level of experience will influence an ability to reflect critically ..Neophyte teachers will not exhibit the same capacity for critical reflection as would a more veteran teacher."

Dewey (1904) attends to reflective ability when he discussed "habit of reflection". To Dewey teacher should know how (the technique) to teach and know how to reflect on the techniques used in classrooms. Reflective teacher, Dewey adds, were freed from engaging in impulsive or routine action.

A reflective teacher will be able to lead in our reformation of schools. Posner argues that " reflective teaching will allow {the teacher} to act in deliberate and intentional ways, to devise new ways of teaching rather than being a slave to tradition, and to interpret new experiences from a fresh perspective."(1985, p.1)

Van Manen (1977) described a conceptional focus on critical reflection. He identified three levels of critical reflection. The first level centered on technical criteria. At this level reflection centers on thinking about techniques used to achieve the stated objectives . The second level involved conceptional reflection. The conceptual level focused on the relationships between the instructor's practices and the theoretical principles guiding the practices. The final level, ethical reflection, would enable the goal of a teacher preparatory program, designed to make reflective teachers, to move pre-service educators from a 'how to' perspective to discussing reflective decision-making. Hence, to be a reflection instructor, one should assess the consequences of actions and to determine ethical, political and moral implications for schooling and learning.

Other theorists have even constructed developmental typologies in describing reflection. Figure 2-3 represents Kitchener and King (1981) and Ross (1989) efforts. This developmental idea suggests that teachers progress through stages of development in their developmental progression.

In order to constructively assist students with reflection, an instructor must become proficient at asking leading reflective questions. Wellington (1991) highlights some useful reflective types of questions:

WELLINGTON'S QUESTIONS
What did I do?
What does it mean?
How did I come to be this way?
How might I do things differently?
What have I learned?

Reflective teachers look at techniques and face frustrations to improve instruction and help students learn. As the instructor reflects more, assignments given to students will lead to more reflection. In a cyclical pattern, as teachers reflect more,their assignments will be more reflective in nature, requiring students to reflect more. Thus a reflective teacher nurtures reflective, exploring students. Reflections allow students to analyze their progress by reviewing their work throughout the year. Students who review their work over time

can see how their thinking and working processes have improved. Many educators voice concern about assessing student reflection; some even question the validity of reflection assessment. Nevertheless, it is important that student reflections be assessed. Teachers must write back to students guiding their reflectivity. For example, " Harry, You did a fine job of summarizing the selection. Try exploring what you are now confident in doing? What you will do to enrich the activity in the future?" This kind of feedback from the teacher will lead students to reflectivity. Once again, to answer the question "Should reflections be assessed? The answer is yes! It is a fact that assessment of reflection takes time, but it is certainly time well spent, both morally and educationally.

In initiating portfolios, the preliminary portfolio assessment might comsist of appraising the physical construction. The evaluator may check to see if the physical construction of the portfolio is adequate. A checklist or criteria building list would help the student understand what must go into the design. On completion of the portfolio, the remaining evaluations should assess reflecting and mastery of the knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Some portfolio advocates believe in the elimination of formal tests in the portfolio. Rather than viewing formal and authentic as polars, our view rests on the idea that authentic assessment actually bridges standardized testing and class assessments. Within the portfolio, a student might (it could also be suggested) include standardized tests with reflective statements.

A Word On Assessing the Portfolio Itself

When discussing the evaluation of the portfolio two givens appear frequently:

GIVEN ONE: Authentic Assessment means moving away from traditional assessment.
GIVEN TWO: The primary success of evaluation is to have students take the ownership of their learning.

In the first given, when discussing authentic assessment, one must be willing to accept that this type of evaluation is truly authentic and breaks away from the restraints of traditional assessment. The old paradigm of putting a letter grade, a point system etc. as the final statement on students' learning seems restrictive. Traditional measures can be a part of the process but never the only, and surely not, the final word.

The second given rests on the premise that teachers have accepted the responsibility of student learning for too long. The responsible to know how each student learned and to make learning occur with each student rested with the teacher. It did not work, did it? Why? Because the traditional practice failed to hold students responsible for their own learning. The public was paying for its free public education, and educators were being held responsible for their learning. Thus they were free to act as the resister; as if the whole program was an opponent of theirs. Their job was to challenge the actual act of learning. To clarify this position, detailing the multi-dimensions of evaluating portfolio follows.

In the planning stages, identification of multiple scoring strategies must occur. Instructors must detail what types of assessments will occur and when,? What will be the place of formal assessments, and if they require students to have formalized tests within the portfolio. Remember it is OK to use traditional assessments, especially for having students see how they score in comparisons. It also helps them reflect on their test taking skills and behaviors. In order to get the portfolio established, devising a checklist or point sheet

could bring all students on line. This might sound behaviorist, but an instructor can use all types of learning theories to accomplish the learning task.

WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY MODEL

Wright State University is a metropolitan state-supported university dedicated to the educational, social, and cultural needs of the Dayton area with an enrollment of 17,000 graduate and undergraduate students.

Portfolio development began at Wright State in the fall of 1988 as a department-wide endeavor. The two areas in which it receives major attention are: (1) Phase I-Education: In this program phase, the beginning teacher education student is enrolled in introductory education course work and is required to begin a Process Portfolio (2) Phase III-Practicum: In the final phase, the students conclude their pre-service training with student teaching and complete a Product Portfolio. Within the Product Portfolio students demonstratie their competency in: 1. achieving the Teacher education objectives, 2. passing the National Teacher Exam and 3. successful fulfilling intern teaching requirements. Along with student teaching, students take their last education course, The Teacher in School and Society. In this course, the portfolio is employed as an assessment tool for the students. Methodological coursework is accomplished in Phase II, and faculty continue portfolio development in this phase with students who have completed the portfolio introduction in Phase I. The portfolio contains five sections as well as the introduction and conclusion. The sections are: Professionalism, Content Mastery, Content Pedagogy, Classroom Management and Student-specific Pedagogy.

During the Phase I experience, students take two education courses and participate in a mentoring partnership. They also have one field experience before the term starts which lasts for one week. The "phase" design permits mentoring throughout the four-course sequence, and a mentoring professor may instruct all four courses.

At the end of the quarter, the portfolios receive a "mentor review" with the evaluation centering on adherence to the prescribed criteria, especially the reflective statements. The mentors use the portfolios during the student/mentor conference held in the last ten days of the term. The portfolio became an asset for these conferences.

Students used the portfolio as an analytical tool for their efforts and found the portfolio activity useful in connecting life experiences to undergraduate education. The Portfolio design infuses formal assessment instruments into two sections of the beginning portfolio. In the Professional section students place two personality assessments and reflect on them (The Myers-Briggs and the Edward's). In the Content Mastery section student insert their PPST scores as well as tests and other achievement instruments that document their content mastery.

Another element of the WSU project involve Phase III, Student Teaching. Student teaching occurs as the terminating experience in the pre-service program and the teacher education faculty believed that in the best interest of graduating students, they construct a Product Portfolio from their process portfolio. The Product Portfolio has several formal evaluation instruments within it. The professional section can have personality instruments and the Professional section of the National Teachers Exam, but it must have proof of the professional teacher education competencies . The content pedagogy section must have the National Teacher Exam sections of content. Other formal content instruments like content classes' formal assessments, PPST or other standardized tests are suggested. Students are required to reflect on these formal instruments and analyze the results.

Wright State's Teacher Education faculty support performance assessment, also known as authentic assessment, in the form of portfolios. We believe it is necessary to use strategies for assessment based on individual accomplishments and real-life circumstances to determine teacher proficiencies.

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